1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

CHAPTER I

THE MURNGIN

The northern shores of Australia are separated in the east from New Guinea by the Torres Strait and the Gulf of Carpentaria, and in the west by the shallow Sea of Arafura. The Indian Ocean lies between Australia and the East Indian island of Timor. Below the Arafura is Arnhem Land, that almost blank space on the map which extends from the Gulf of Carpentaria to the Indian Ocean. In the furthermost northern and eastern parts of this latter region are several tribes which may be referred to collectively as the Murngin. Their ancestors lived here many hundreds and probably thousands of years before them.[1]

Eastern and northern Arnhem Land are unpopulated by whites except for a half dozen or more missionaries who are stationed at three comparatively recent Christian outposts. Traders infrequently sail their two-masted luggers into the shallow harbors and mouths of the tidal rivers to exchange their goods with the natives; all other economic efforts have been unprofitable. On the southern borders of this huge territory white civilization is making a melancholy and profitless effort to implant its own markings in the form of cattle ranches on the bleak country that lies along the southern banks of the Roper River. A telegraph system which unites white Australia with the rest of the British Empire stretches from the populous cities of southern Australia across the barren central desert into the western border of Arnhem Land and terminates at the tiny, isolated town of Port Darwin.

The Murngin live some ten to fifteen degrees south of the equator in a land which has little elevation. The climate is tropical and marked by the sharp, seasonal cycles of the rainy and dry periods, with corresponding changes in the prevailing winds or monsoons. The long flat coastal regions have a savanna type of vegetation, with the ubiquitous mangrove here and there forming dense jungle groves along the flat sandy islands, bays, and tidal rivers. The groves of ti trees in this region are green oases which the native sees as he journeys in from the barren

[1] See Appendix I, Social Change in North Australia.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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133 alkaline plains and approaches the marshy lakes that are abundantly
137 present in the rainy season and frequently absent in the dry period. The acacia and the eucalyptus are familiar and frequent in both the low and the high lands, and spear grass covers the land in dense growths during the months of rain.

136 The animals, with certain minor variations, are the usual marsupials and monotremes found in Australia, with the bat and wild domestic dog the only mammalia living in the region. Nature is bountiful with
[262] many varieties of birds, fish, and other animals; but vegetable foods, although plentiful, are limited in variety.

144 The Murngin people belong to the aboriginal Australoid race found throughout Australia—not Mongoloid, Negroid, or Caucasian, but a variant group which seems to be a blend of many of the features of the
[197] white and black races.[2] Their language is one of the Australo-Dravidian linguistic group. They belong to a Stone Age culture; were they placed
105 in our own chronology, their technological development would fall somewhere between the Old and the New Stone Ages.

The Murngin civilization is a simple Australian culture with a small hunting and gathering population which lives off the sea and the land. The natural environment which surrounds it and drastically affects native behavior consists of *two changes which make up the yearly cycle*; one of these is extremely rainy, producing a period of scarcity, and the other a dry period when there is an abundance of food. The technology can be described briefly as the adaptive mechanisms of the general society to these two parts of the cycle of nature.

614 The social organization must be given in a more detailed description.
423 The fundamental basis of the society is an elaborate kinship[3] system in which everyone is related to everyone else. This kinship system is organized into more general units which are patrilineal,[3] exogamic[3] clans[3] which have local territories that were "given to them by the totems."[3] All parts of the clan land have totemic references. Each clan has multiple totems; all clans have at least one, possibly more, sacred water holes where live the high totems, the totemic ancestors, the ancestral dead, and the totemic spirits of the unborn. The names of all clansmen have totemic significance, and the whole general totemic pattern is related to the clan.

[101] [2] See Appendix VII.—The term "Black" in the title of this book, *A Black Civilization*, is not to be interpreted as describing these people as purely Negroid. The term refers, rather, to their popular name, "Australian Blacks," and to the name they accept for themselves from the Australian whites, "Blackfellows."

[3] See Glossary of Technical Terms, page 566.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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CHAPTER II

THE LOCAL ORGANIZATION

The eight tribes[1] considered in this book, of which the Murngin[2] (fire sparks) is the principal one, have the same kinship system, the same form of local organization, largely the same myths and ceremonies, and, in general, the same culture, with only those minor variations found in any homogeneous civilization. This similarity is particularly true of the basic structure of the local organization.

The Murngin and surrounding peoples have the following institutions which organize them into local groupings:[3] (1) patrilineal clans, (2) moieties, (3) phratries, (4) tribes, and (5) economic groups called hordes. Within these institutions and helping to integrate them functionally into a more complex society are a limited family, a classificatory kinship system, and a modified subsection system described in Chapter III.

The clan and moiety are the two most important units in the local organization.[4] The clan will be examined first, then the moiety with the clan grouping, and after this the phratry and tribe—the clan and moiety first, because they are the fundamental structures found

[1] See map, page 40, for the following tribes: Yaernungo, Burera, Murngin, Barlamumu, Djinba, Ritarngo, Yandjinung, and Dai.

[2] As stated earlier the tribe can hardly be said to exist in this area. And of all the tribes studied, the Murngin is the weakest in form. The word Murngin was found as a designation only after much effort. The people do not think of themselves under this name or classification. The word has been used by me as a general term for all of the eight tribes in the area and for the groups of people located in the central part of the territory of the eight tribes. I have seized upon this name as a convenient and concise way of talking about this whole group of people; had any of the other tribes who possess the particular type of social organization found in this area been located in the center of the group, I should have used the name of that tribe rather than Murngin.

[3] See Glossary for all native and technical terms.

[4] On pages 39 ff. will be found a list of clans, with the English equivalents of the native clan names. The common or ordinary name is given in most cases, as well as the sacred or totemic name. These clans are numbered to enable the reader to refer to the geographical location of each clan on the map which immediately follows the list.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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619 area are used much more commonly than the tribal to describe a particular people.

●101 Arnhem Land, north of the Roper River and the upper waters of the Katherine River, has four large cultural groups. The differences are mostly in immaterial culture, and although of considerable importance from a local point of view, the cultures are but subtypes of a larger culture. The four divisions, the first the Murngin, are found among the eight tribes that inhabit the country from Cape Wessel in the northeast, the islands and the coast of the eastern side of the Gulf of Carpentaria to Blue Mud Bay, and eastward over to the upper waters of the Goyder and Glyde Rivers. This culture continues westward to Cape Stewart along the coast line of the Arafura Sea. West of them, including the tribe on each side of Caddell and Liverpool Rivers to the seacoast of Van Diemen's Gulf, the Kariera type of social organization is found. South of Blue Mud Bay, along the seacoast, the Mara-Anula form of social organization appears, and the Arunta type is found in the islands of this region.[18]

101 The Murngin type of culture is possessed by eight tribes: the Murn-
619 gin, Yaernungo, Burera, Yandjinung, Djinba, Ritarngo, Barlamomo, and Dai. The Yaernungo, Burera, Yandjinung, Djinba and Ritarngo are definitely recognized divisions in the culture, although their exact boundaries are not known, for a border-line clan may be in one group for some purposes and in another for others. The Dai, Barlamomo, and Murngin are not clearly defined in the minds of the natives and the designations are of little consequence in their thinking and seldom used. The Ritarngo and Djinba tribesmen to the south and west call these people to the north of them Murngin, and distinguish them as different from themselves. The Yaernungo, north of the Murngin, do the same, but to a lesser degree. The Yandjinung also call the clans in different areas, including the Karmalanga of Banyan Island and the Wulkara of Howard Island, by the name of Murngin; the Murngin, however, look upon them as members of the Yandjinung tribe. The people of these islands usually consider themselves as belonging to the Yandjinung but occasionally place themselves in the Yaernungo tribe.

101 The Dai are very frequently classed as Murngin. The dialect of this
[197] tribe is that of the clans north of it, which are classed as Murngin.

[18] The names Arunta, Kariera, Mara-Anula, and Murngin are used here not as tribal distinctions, but as types of kinship organizations which form the basic foundation for general variations in the social organization.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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The Barlamomo occupy a similar position in relation to the Murngin. The Dai and Barlamomo can hardly be ranked as tribes, except that the terms are loosely used by the natives for groups of clans belonging to either moiety; and since they cannot be phratries and belong to both groups of the dual division, and since there is a vague recognition of their distinctiveness in their having names and being considered by the people to the north as each one people, they have been ranked as tribes by the writer, with full recognition that such a designation is too ample and solid a term to describe them.

The Djawark and Darlwongo clans sometimes are included among the Dai; the Marderpa group may be classed as Dai, Murngin, or Ritarngo, according to the feeling of the people within the clan or those without who distinguish them.

Within the region east of the Yandjinung, Burera, Djinba, and Ritarngo tribes, and including the peoples known as Yaernungo, Dai, Barlamomo, and Murngin, there is considerable linguistic homogeneity. All the peoples included in the latter four tribes can understand the various dialectic variations found throughout the area. The greatest divergence in dialect is among the Yaernungo, but the Liaalaomir of the Goyder River on the one hand, and the Wanguri and Warumeri of Arnhem Bay on the other, also present considerable variation in speech. The peoples belonging to the tribes in the area mentioned above cannot understand the languages of the other tribes along their borders unless they have learned them as separate tongues. Linguistic ability is very marked among all these people. It would be difficult to find a Murngin adult who could not speak three or four languages, and frequently men speak seven and eight.

There is greater difference between these northern languages of Australia than there is between French and English. The Burera have the most divergent tongue and are definitely affiliated linguistically with the more western peoples such as the Gun-wing-u and Maung.

As will be seen from the map, the Murngin have many more clans than the other tribes. It cannot be stated as a definite hypothesis, but very likely that the group of the Murngin associated together under the moiety "linguistic" terms as Djambarpingu and Koparpingu are one people and differentiated from the rest of the Murngin. When asked to what people they belong, they always reply Djambarpingu or Koparpingu, according to the moiety. The clans usually classed as belonging to the two groups are:

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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101 Djambarpingu (Dua)
174 Liagaomir
Naladaer
614 Djirin
Gwiyula
Djapu
Maradunggimi (sometimes classed with Barlamomo tribe)
Djawark

Koparpingu (Yiritja)
Daiuror
Gwiyamil
Birkili
Burilung (sometimes classed with Barlamomo tribe)

If the above hypothesis is true, this group in an earlier period was confined to the area around Buckingham Bay, Arnhem Bay, Elcho Island, and the English Company Islands. I was unable to find a general name covering both divisions to substantiate this historical contention. The Malay trader undoubtedly widened the horizon of the society by his movements along the coast, and with the introduction of the dugout canoe made possible longer, more rapid journeys and wider contacts among the peoples of the various clans comprising this and the present Murngin group; before this time the only means of travel had been by foot or by the frail bark canoe and rafts. It seems likely to me that the Malay's advent, which occurred at least several hundred years ago, provides sufficient explanation for the breakdown of the earlier tribal grouping—which, if similar to that of present-day tribes was a very weak manifestation at best—and for the formation of a larger Murngin group.

197 Pronunciation varies greatly locally. This linguistic differentiation does not coincide with tribal areas, although there is a tendency for the tribes to be linguistically distinguished. As has been stated, all the clans consider themselves linguistically distinct, and members of the two moieties believe they speak different dialects. This insistence on linguistic difference is so extreme that members of the same clan pronounce their words with a suitable amount of variation. Any attempt to state that this dialect or that method of pronunciation is a standard and exact one is likely to be a projection of our own ethnocentric linguistic values. The western Europeans and the Americans, particularly since the advent of the public school, have made an extreme fetish of standard English and correct pronunciation. There has been, with the general urge, a general standardization of speech. We frequently assume that the primitives always do as we do in their speech habits. This may or may not be true. The Murngin have an extreme

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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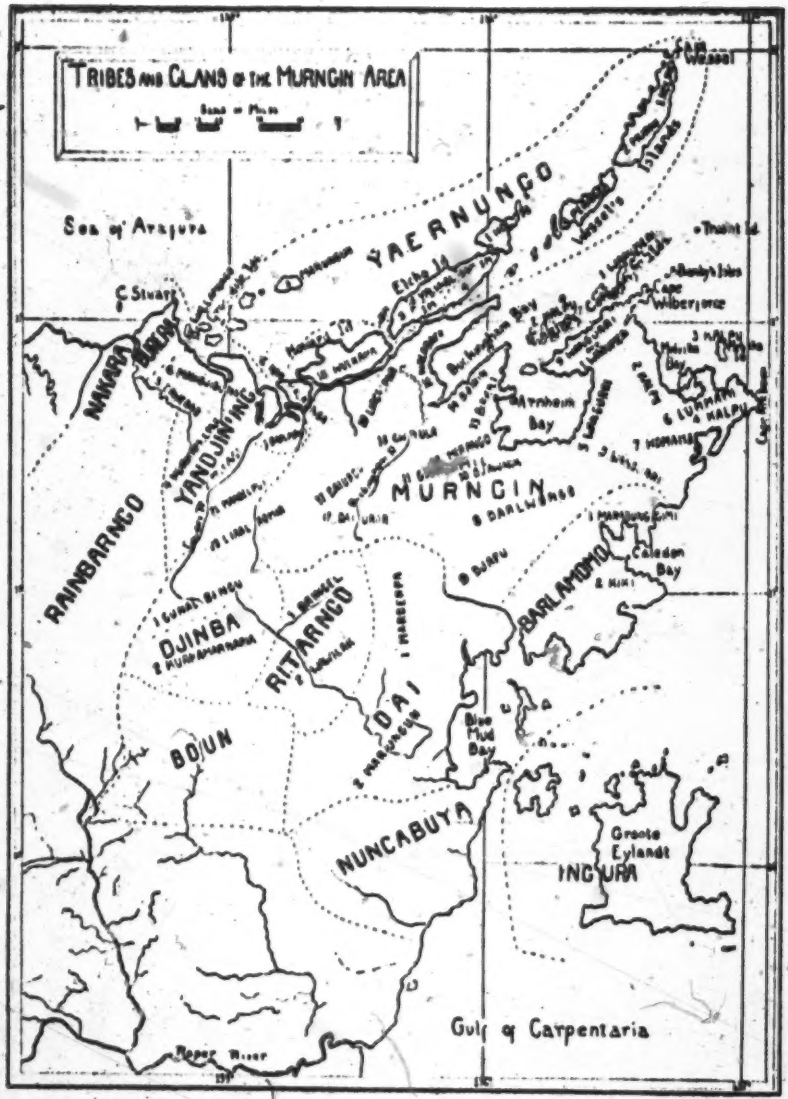

2: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1955
OI17 Murngin OI17

and the internal or domestic aspects." In the latter context kinship carries maximum weight; among the Wulamba there is more or less equal balance between these two features. The corporate body as such, among the Wulamba, is based on kinship.

As Fortes has pointed out (1953:31), when lineage structure is discussed it is considered "from a particular analytical angle, with the organization of jural, economic, and ritual activities." It is on this aspect that we require more detailed consideration in relation to the descent group among the Wulamba. This is the case, too, with the structure of authority mentioned by Fortes (p. 32), for a lineage as a corporate group. Each Wulamba descent group has an acknowledged head, an elder to whom all within his group look up. He, in conjunction with elders of other parallel groups forming the linguistic group, has special ritual duties and power: his authority is reinforced by ritual sanctions. It would seem, then, that a more detailed analysis of the significance of the descent group in Arnhem Land religious life would be a rewarding avenue of investigation.

In these last few paragraphs my purpose has been only to consider the corporate unilineal descent group (as found among the Wulamba) in relation to what Fortes has termed the lineage. It (i.e., the unilineal descent group) is for him the basic determinant of lineage structure. If that is so, we can legitimately mention some of his broad generalizations in relation to our concept. Further, we have not deliberately tried to show that the descent group as present in northeastern Arnhem Land social structure is, or may be, equated with a lineage. But there are points of comparison between these two separate, but similar, concepts. These aspects of compatibility we have indicated, and they are propositions for further empirical testing.

NOTES

[1] I have preferred the term used by the people themselves: they are the Wulamba, which refers collectively to all their clans; that is, they may be said to be the Wulamba bloc. The varying dialects are collectively known as Miwoldj. Warner (1937) erroneously used the term "Murngin," which is the name of only one clan and should not be used in this sense.

[2] The material presented here was obtained at Millingimbi in 1950; short periods of work had previously been spent there, in 1946 and 1947. More intensive field work was carried out in 1946–47 within the vicinity of Yirrkalla, northeastern Arnhem Land. The initial period of research was carried out under the Australian National Research Council, the latter under the Research Committee of the University of Sydney: both were under the auspices of the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney. The writer wishes to acknowledge the help and encouragement of Professor A. P. Elkin of that Department. This paper was written under a Nuffield Foundation Dominion Fellowship, in London. It was presented in part and discussed at a seminar on kinship theory at the London School of Economics.

[3] The kinship terms used in this paper are in their Anglicised equivalents: these differ in some cases from those used by Warner and Radcliffe-Brown. For instance, *mirikmo* is *marimo; yppa, joba; maralicha, maraldja; mareiker, maralgur; kutara, gudara; mati, gudi; gawel, galwal; arudi, gundi; galle, galei; duf, duwel; natjiwalker, gudiwalgur; kaminjer, gaminjar;* etc. Terms in capitals denote males.

[4] The approximate population of Arnhem Land is 4,000; 1,200 to 2,000 possibly belonging to the Wulamba bloc.

4: Berndt & Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1948
OI17 Murngin OI17

particular spirit-being has its mythology, ceremonies and elaborate song cycles, some consisting of several hundreds of separate and lengthy songs. This is particularly the case with the concept of the *'Wawalak* Sisters, which have both sacred and secular songs and ceremonies.[2]

The aborigines of this area belong to what Professor Lloyd Warner has called the "Murngin" culture.[3] They consist of groups of separate clans with a more or less common cultural background[4]: "Murngin" is one name of one of these many clans. They stretch from a point north of Rose River on the south-east of Arnhem Land (opposite Groote Eylandt) north along the coast through Blue Mud and Caledon Bays, Cape Arnhem and Yirrkalla, English Company, Wessell and Elcho Islands, Arnhem Bay, Crocodile Islands (around Milingimbi) to Cape Stewart, but do not penetrate far into the interior. Their dialects vary, but belong to one language group.[5] The clans are divided between *[illegible]itja* and *'dua* patrilineal moieties. A subsection system is being gradually introduced from the south and south-west, but has not yet been fully accepted.

These natives are semi-nomadic and hunt and collect food over wide areas. They rely principally on marine foods, which are plentiful, so that their economy is more or less balanced throughout the whole year.

For many years these coastal aborigines have been in direct and indirect contact with alien groups, particularly with the Malayan and Macassan traders who travelled down to the north coast of Australia from the East Indies in search of trepang (bêche de mer) and other natural products obtained by local aborigines.[6] In the course of years of trading, these visitors had much association with the indigenous inhabitants, and established settlements at desirable sites, particularly on the north-eastern corner of Arnhem Land, where they stayed for several months in each year. After the wet season, in about May or June, they returned in their proas on the south-east winds, sometimes taking aborigines as part of their crew. This contact ended (being prohibited by law) in 1907, but Japanese pearlers continued to visit the shores up to the recent war.

Such intensive contact over a long period made a strong impression on the aborigines; this can be observed to-day in certain elements of the religious life and dogma, in secular ceremonies and songs, in mortuary rites and songs, in mythology

[2] A detailed study of north-eastern Arnhem Land religious beliefs and dogma will be published later.

[3] L. Warner, *A Black Civilization*, 1937.

[4] They may be conveniently termed the 'Wulamba Confederacy. *Vide* also T. Webb, "Tribal Organization in Eastern Arnhem Land," *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, p. 410.

[5] *Vide* A. Capell, "Languages of Arnhem Land, North Australia," *Oceania*, Vol. XII, No. 4, and Vol. XIII, No. 1. The collective dialects of this language group can, for convenience, be called *'Miwulf 'mala*.

[6] The date of their first contact is a matter of speculation, but is possibly much earlier than has hitherto been stated. A comparatively large collection of pottery shards, recovered from Port Bradshaw, not far distant from Yirrkalla, to be discussed later, may enable an approximate date to be fixed for the establishment of the Macassan settlements, remains of which are still known to the natives.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

from the Church Missionary Society settlement at Groote Eylandt, and 90 miles from the nearest Methodist Mission at Elcho Island. Apart from the Mission stations of Roper River, Oenpelli, Goulburn Island, Milingimbi, Elcho Island, Yirrkalla and Groote Eylandt, which fringe the great Reserve, there is no other European settlement, except the new base subsidized by the Northern Territory Native Affairs Branch at Ambu Kambu on Groote Eylandt.

The whole region is rich in indigenous foods and resources, particularly along the coast. The sea abounds in dugong, turtle, fish, crayfish, shellfish, oysters, and crabs: inland, on the plains and in the jungles, there are wildfowl, emu, wallaby, kangaroo, and smaller animals, fruit, nuts, vegetables, berries, and a large variety of other bush foods, with quantities of fresh-water fish and crocodiles in the streams and rivers; and at times buffalo which have wandered eastwards from the Buffalo Plains west of Oenpelli. So plentiful is the food that, even in bad seasons, the quality may diminish, but rarely the quantity.

b Social Organization:

Before proceeding to our main study, it is necessary to outline briefly the structure of north-eastern Arnhem Land society. The work of Professor Lloyd Warner is the most reliable in this respect, while the Rev. T. T. Webb and Dr. Donald Thomson have written on the subject.[1] The reader will find sufficient detail in these for our present purpose. But it should be borne in mind that the organization of Yirrkalla society, although basically similar to that of Milingimbi, is in many respects decidedly different. Dr. Warner viewed aboriginal social life through the eyes of Milingimbi informants, influenced by cultural trends from Cape Stewart and the inland, while the present writer views the same position from the Yirrkalla point of view, uninfluenced to any marked degree from the west, but responding to contact from aboriginal groups to the south and south-west (this is particularly apparent in our study of the Kunapipi cult).

These people of eastern Arnhem Land, from Cape Stewart to Blue Mud Bay, had a general term for themselves—the Wulamba group of clans, forming a tribe with a more or less common cultural background: natives outside this region, such as those at Groote Eylandt, called them the "Balamumu" confederacy. Balamumu may be broadly translated as "those of the sea", that is, coastal people. The varying dialects (termed *mata*, "tongue") of these clans (*mala*)

1. L. Warner, *A Black Civilization*, New York and London, 1937; T. T. Webb, Tribal Organization in Eastern Arnhem Land, *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 406-411; A. P. Elkin, Marriage and Descent in East Arnhem Land, *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 412-416; D. Thomson, *Interim General Report of Preliminary Expedition to Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia*, 1935-36, Department of Interior, Canberra, 1936, pp. 31-34.

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
OI17 Murngin OI17

Foreword

themselves considered the Djanggawul to be the dominant figures in the Ancestral Times, and this attitude was borne out in the reverence they gave and the attention they paid to all features relating to the Djanggawul. Even those of the opposite moiety, people who looked to Laintjung and Banaitja, admitted the primary importance of the *dua* Djanggawul. I was fortunate, during this period, in being able to examine and record a number of versions of Djanggawul mythology from a relatively wide range of informants, the majority of whom were ceremonial headmen for their particular linguistic groups, and in addition to record in detail the greater part of the associated song cycle. I was able also to attend most of the *dua nara* rituals that took place during my visit. My knowledge of these rituals and songs was considerably enhanced later after a further visit to the north-central region, Milingimbi, where the Djanggawul song cycle was again obtained in detail, and relevant rituals observed.

The social organization and the culture of eastern Arnhem Land have already been treated partially in other works,[1] so that there is no need here for repetition. The reader is warned, however, that he will find it necessary to refer to these for information on various points such as the *dua-jiritja* moiety system, the clan and linguistic group organization, marriage rules, economic background and natural resources of this region, and so on, which although relevant to this study cannot here be treated in full. Arnhem Land is to-day an Aboriginal Reserve in the north-eastern region of the Northern Territory of Australia,[2] and a similar cultural pattern extends from Blue Mud Bay in the south-east to Cape Stewart on the north-central coast. That is to say, all the Aborigines within this area (approximately 1,500 to 2,000) possess a common social organization and religious ideology, and speak varying dialects of one

[1] *Vide* L. Warner, *op. cit.*, 1937; also, by the same author, 'Morphology and Functions of the Australian Murngin Type of Kinship', *American Anthropologist*, n.s., 33, 2, 184; T. T. Webb, 'Tribal Organization in Eastern Arnhem Land', *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4; A. P. Elkin, 'Marriage and Descent in East Arnhem Land', *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 412-16, and his 'The Complexity of Social Organization in Arnhem Land', *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 1-20; W. E. Lawrence and G. P. Murdock, 'Murngin Social Organization', *American Anthropologist*, 1949, Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 58-65; A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1950, and *University of Chicago Press*, 1950, pp. 20-7; R. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1951, Chapter I *b*.

[2] For its geographical position and natural resources, see A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *op. cit.*, 1950, pp. 20-1, R. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, Chapter I *a*, and R. and C. Berndt, *Arnhem Land—Its History and Its People*, for publication, Cheshire, Melbourne. See also accompanying map to this volume.

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
OI17 Murngin OI17

language. Their society is constructed on the moiety principle, and descent is in all cases primarily patrilineal. There is no clearly defined tribe, but a series of linguistic groups associated with clans; all of these may be called, collectively, the Wulamba bloc of the Miwaitj language group (referring to the sum total of the different dialects). Yirrkalla is situated on the extreme north-east corner of Arnhem Land between Melville Bay and Cape Arnhem, and Aborigines gather there from places as far distant as Blue Mud and Caledon and Trial Bays, Rose River, and Woodah and Groote Islands in the south and south-east, and Arnhem and Buckingham Bays, Elcho, English Company and Wessel Islands in the north-west. Milingimbi is in the Crocodile Island group on the central-north coast; it is also a meeting place for members of many groups, particularly those from the mainland around the Blyth, Goyder and Woolen Rivers.

Virtually all the writer's field work has been carried out through the medium of the native language, both at Yirrkalla and Milingimbi. Knowledge of local dialects is essential in social anthropological work, and particularly in a study of Aboriginal religion. Field work at Yirrkalla was carried out in 1946–7 and at Milingimbi in 1950 (a total period of thirteen months actually working on the field in this particular region); the first period was made possible by grants from the Australian National Research Council, and was under the auspices of the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, while the latter period was financed by grants from the Research Committee of the University of Sydney and the Department of Anthropology of the same University. Writing up of this material was also made possible by grants from the Research Committee.

So many informants have helped in the process of collecting the data presented here that a list of their names would be tiresome and meaningless to the reader. Not only main *dua* moiety headmen, but also those of the *jiritja* moiety, contributed; and these were members of many linguistic groups. In addition, attitudes of local Aboriginal women towards this religious cult were discussed with them by my wife (Catherine Berndt), and this aided directly the analysis of certain sections. This study of the Djanggawul, then, does not express solely the information and attitudes of male natives, but takes into account both male and female elements in the culture. The practice in recording the interlinear phonetic renderings of the songs was for informants belonging to a particular area through which the Djanggawul passed to put forward those songs themselves, for it was their country and they were expected to have more complete knowledge of the songs. In this way, each

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
O117 Murngin O117

THE ARNHEM LAND ABORIGINES

Arnhem Land belongs to two main groups, who differ considerably insofar as language and certain aspects of their culture are concerned. Perhaps the best way to present a clear general picture of their culture patterns is to outline and contrast the elements that are outstanding in both. For the sake of brevity we shall not digress to discuss minor local deviations like those of the Groote Eylandt and Rose River areas.

A common cultural bond links most of the Aborigines of western Arnhem Land, taking Oenpelli, the Goulburn Islands, and the Liverpool and King rivers, with its eastern boundary near Cape Stewart; but there are some traditional deviations, as well as some linguistic differences. The Maung of Goulburn Islands seem to have been at one period more or less isolated from contact with the mainlanders, who rarely came over to the islands; but at ceremonial times the Maung would come to Sandy Creek, on the mainland opposite South Goulburn Island, for the big *maraiin* (sacred) rituals.

The people of eastern Arnhem Land, from Cape Stewart to Blue Mud Bay, refer to themselves as the Wulamba group, a number of clans that form a "tribe" with more or less common cultural background. Natives outside this region, for example those at Groote Eylandt, often call them the "Balamumu Confederacy". "Balamumu" may be roughly translated as "those of the sea", that is, coastal people. The dialects of all these clans may be classed together as Miwoidjmada. The whole eastern area is divided among a number of clans, some now extinct and others seriously diminished in population, which share certain linguistic groups. These language groups are considered most important, and they belong exclusively to either the *dua* or the *jiritja* moiety, a division which extends throughout this whole area. Descent within them is patrilineal, but a man (or woman) always feels some attachment to the clan and linguistic group of his mother and mother's brother.

In western Arnhem Land, tribes and groups of tribes are (or were) independent units, not subdivided into clans. Tribal blocs were formed by those dependent on their neighbours in matters affecting economy, marriage and secular and sacred ceremony, and certain tribes recognised closer ties with one another than

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

greatest of the Reserves and is in the north of the Northern Territory. Its northern shores are washed by the Arafura Sea; on the east it is bounded by the Gulf of Carpentaria; and to the south lies the barrier of high, impenetrable, barren sand-stone mountains and deep gorges. Approximately thirty-four thousand square miles of this desolate country, with its aboriginal population of three thousand, was declared an Aboriginal Reserve in 1931.

The writing of this book has entailed the collecting of notes, incidents, myths, and nomads' quaint sayings, which I have jotted down on scraps of paper or on the fly-leaves of books I have had with me in the bush, in aboriginal canoes, or on luggers. In the spelling of aboriginal names and phrases I have not used any system of phonetics, but have attempted to give ordinary English letter values. 'Yulengor' is a general race-term applied by Stone Age men of east Arnhem Land to all nomads, in the way that we refer to them as aborigines. 'Yulengor' is not used elsewhere.

I gratefully acknowledge help given by Professor A. P. Elkin who prepared the illuminating introduction. But for my wife the notes would have been offered to the public years ago, and she has my thanks for the wisdom of such restraint, and for encouragement and constructive criticism as I have attempted to convey to the printed page the fascinating customs, unforgettable experiences, and mind-teasing Yulengor sayings of Arnhem Land.

W. E. C.

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